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ANNE RICE'S SERVANT OF THE BONES



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In New York City, a young beautiful girl, Esther Belkin, is horrifically murdered on the streets. Her former teacher, Jonathan, leaves the city and is trapped in an isolated mountain cabin in a storm, falls ill, and is saved by a mysterious young man. This same young man, Azriel, turns out to be a spirit of vengeance. He killed the men who murdered Esther, but it is not where his tale begins. It begins in ancient Babylon, when gods still walked the earth...



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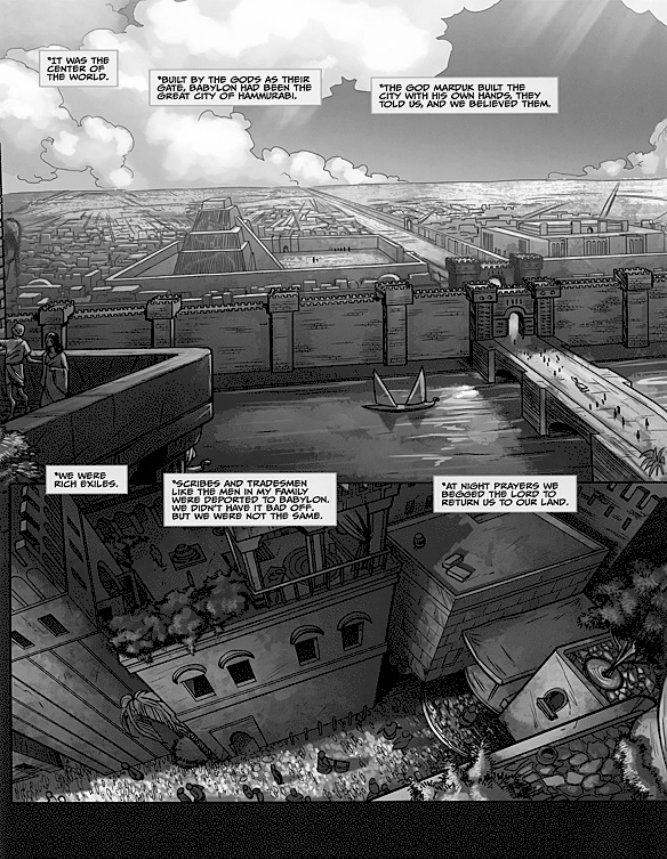
I DIDN'T
REMEMBER
JERUSALEM.

I WASN'T BORN
THERE. MY MOTHER WAS
CARRIED OFF AS A CHILD
BY NEBUCHADNEZZAR.

I WAS BORN A
HEBREW, BUT I KNEW
THE BABYLONIAN GODS
AS WELL AS I KNEW
THE PSALMS OF DAVID,
OR THE BOOK OF
SAMUEL.



MY WHOLE
LIFE WAS
BABYLON.



"IT WAS THE
CENTER OF
THE WORLD.

"BUILT BY THE GODS AS THEIR
GATE, BABYLON HAD BEEN THE
GREAT CITY OF HAMMURABI.

"THE GOD MARDUK BUILT THE
CITY WITH HIS OWN HANDS. THEY
TOLD US, AND WE BELIEVED THEM.

"WE WERE
RICH EXILES.

"SCRIBES AND TRADESMEN
LIKE THE MEN IN MY FAMILY
WERE DEPORTED TO BABYLON.
WE DIDN'T HAVE IT BAD OFF,
BUT WE WERE NOT THE SAME.

"AT NIGHT PRAYERS WE
BEGGED THE LORD TO
RETURN US TO OUR LAND.



*EARLY ON I FELL IN WITH THE
BABYLONIAN WAYS. EVERYBODY HAD
A PERSONAL GOD HE PRAYED TO.

*I CHOSE MARDUK.

*SO YOU CAN IMAGINE THE UPROAR
WHEN I BROUGHT HOME A SMALL,
PURE GOLD STATUE OF MARDUK.

*BUT MY FATHER
JUST LAUGHED.

*HE SAID, "YAHWEH IS YOUR GOD.
WHEN YOU GET SICK OF ALL THIS
SUPERSTITIOUS STUFF, BREAK THE
STATUE. YOU CANNOT BREAK
OUR GOD, FOR HE IS NOT IN GOLD
OR PRECIOUS METAL. HE HAS NO
TEMPLE. HE IS ABOVE SUCH THINGS."

*TYPICAL OF MY BEAUTIFUL,
INNOCENT FATHER.*



"I STARTED
JUST, YOU KNOW,
CALLING ON
MARDUK TO BE
MY GUARDIAN.

"I PRAYED TO HIM
ALL THE TIME. I
MADE OFFERINGS.
NOBODY PAID
MUCH ATTENTION.

"BUT THEN
MARDUK BEGAN
TO ANSWER ME.
I WAS STILL
FAIRLY YOUNG.

"MARDUK
NEEDED..."



HE
NEEDED
YOU?"

WELL,
HE WANTED MY
COMPANY. HE HAD
ALL OF BABYLON.
I CAN'T SAY HE
NEEDED ME.

BUT THESE
FEELINGS,
THEY ARE
COMPLEX.



HE DID NOT EXPLAIN
THE PICTURE, OF A
MAN WHO LOOKED
LIKE GREGORY
BELKIN. BUT WASN'T.
I WAS PUZZLED."



I WAS
MADE TO
DESTROY.



HE HAD CHANGED AGAIN, AND FOR JUST ONE MOMENT, I KNEW FEAR.

I KNEW THE MOST SUDDEN OVERWHELMING EMOTION. I THOUGHT: AM I DYING? AM I DREAMING? AM I DREAMING, IMAGINING I'M TALKING TO THIS BEAUTIFUL YOUNG MAN?

YOU ARE NOT DREAMING, JONATHAN.



HOW DO YOU DO THAT? MAKE YOURSELF CHANGE?

THERE IS LITTLE TO IT. SCIENCE WILL ONE DAY BE ABLE TO CONTROL IT. I SEE THESE CLOTHES IN MY MIND... AND IT IS DONE.



HE BEGAN SPEAKING AGAIN, IN A VOICE SO LOW I HAD TO STRAIN TO DISSENTANGLE IT FROM THE DEVOURING RUSH OF THE FIRE.

AS I SAID, WE WERE RICH EXILES. BY THE TIME I WAS ELEVEN YEARS OLD I HAD BEEN TO THE TEMPLE ITSELF, A PAGE, AS MANY A RICH HEBREW BOY WAS.

I HAD ENTERED INTO THE SHRINE AND THE STRANGEST THOUGHT HAD OCCURRED TO ME...

"...THIS BIG STATUE LOOKED MORE LIKE ME THAN THE LITTLE ONE I HAD.

"OF COURSE, I DID NOT CHIRP THIS OUT LOUD, BUT AS I LOOKED UP AT THE MIGHTY MARDUK...



"...THE STATUE IN WHICH THE GOD LIVED AND RULED... IT SMILED."

"I WAS TOO CLEVER
TO SAY ANYTHING TO
THE PRIESTS. YET
THEY WERE ON TO IT.

"I THOUGHT IT
WAS HILARIOUS
AND WONDERFUL.

"MARDUK BEGAN
SPEAKING TO ME
ALL THE TIME.

"WE LIVED IN THE
RICH HEBREW
QUARTER. OUR
HOUSE WAS FULL
OF LIGHT AND
MUSIC AND ART.

"MY FRIENDS
OFTEN TEASED
ME ABOUT BEING
TOO HAPPY."

YOU GREW
UP ON BEAUTY,
DIDN'T YOU?

YES. AND
I GREW UP
ON LOVE.

"I LEARNED MY
LESSONS. I WROTE
FAST. MY WRITING WAS
GOOD, REALLY GOOD.

"WE GATHERED AT PRIVATE HOMES
FOR PRAYER, TO OUR INVISIBLE
AND ALL-POWERFUL YAHWEH.

"WHEN I WAS OLDER I WORKED IN
THE COURT, WITH THE WISE MEN OF
THE KING. AND I REALIZED...

"... SOME OF THEM COULD HEAR
MARDUK WHEN HE TALKED TO ME, AND
THE STORY OF THE GOD SMILING ON
ME HAD NOT BEEN FORGOTTEN.

"WALKING HOME,
NINETEEN, NOT
REALIZING I HAD
VERY LITTLE TIME
LEFT TO LIVE, I
ASKED HIM:

"HOW CAN THESE WISE
MEN HEAR YOU? HE
SAID THEY WERE SEERS
AND SORCERORS, THEY
HAD THE SAME POWER I
DID TO HEAR THE SPIRIT.

THESE MEN
KNOW YOUR
POWERS. YOU
MUST TAKE
CARE.

"I GOT TO OUR FRONT DOOR AND,
THOUGH I HAD ALWAYS HEARD HIM LIKE A
BREATH, NOW I ACTUALLY LAID EYES ON
HIM. NOT THE STATUES, MARDUK HIMSELF.
HE WAS ALIVE AND HE SMILED AT ME."

AH,
AZRIEL. I KNEW
IT WOULD HAPPEN.
I KNEW IT.

"DID ANYONE
ELSE SEE HIM?"

"YES, THE DOORKEEPER TO OUR
HOUSE SAW HIM AND ALL BUT FAINTED
DEAD AWAY. ONE OF MY SISTERS,
TOO, AND A HEBREW ELDER WHO
CAME FLYING AT ME LATER, CLAIMING
HE HAD SEEN ME WITH AN ANGEL OR
A DEVIL, HE WAS NOT SURE WHICH.

"MY FATHER AND I WERE
CLOSE. THAT NIGHT I TOLD
HIM I DRANK THAT THE
GREAT GOD MARDUK HAD
TALKED TO ME FOR YEARS.
THAT I HAD SEEN HIM.

"MARDUK WAS THERE,
AND HE TURNED HIS
BACK WHEN I TOLD
MY FATHER.

"BUT I WAS SO
HAPPY, I WANTED
HIM TO KNOW.

"WHAT FRIENDS
WE WERE."

I SHOULD
NOT HAVE
TOLD HIM.





"I TOLD HIM I SAW MY GOD
WITH MY OWN EYES. THAT I
AM AN IDOLATER BUT THAT
MARDUK WALKS WITH ME."

"HE WAS ANGRY
WITH ME."



"YOU ARE
A WISE MAN,
A SEER, AND YOU
HAVE MISUSED YOUR
POWERS. YOU
SHOULD HAVE
USED THEM
FOR US."

"I WILL, FATHER,
BUT TELL ME: WHAT
DO YOU WANT ME TO
DO? MARDUK ASKS
NOTHING OF ME.
WHAT DO YOU WANT
ME TO DO?"



"WORKING IN THE PALACE
TOGETHER, WE HAD SHARED
PRIVATE JOKES ABOUT THE
BABYLONIAN BELIEFS, AND
NOW I WAS TELLING HIM I
HAD SEEN THEIR GOD."



"MARDUK CAME TO
ME THE NEXT DAY."



"DON'T TOUCH
ME OR WE'LL
HAVE A RELIGIOUS
SPECTACLE ON
OUR HANDS."

"ARE YOU
ANGRY WITH ME
FOR TELLING
MY FATHER?"

"NO, BUT I DO NOT
TRUST THE PRIESTS.
LET US GO TO THE
PUBLIC GARDENS. I
LIKE TO WATCH YOU
EAT AND DRINK."



"WE REALLY DID LOOK SO MUCH ALIKE, WE COULD HAVE BEEN BROTHERS."

"I LOVED MY OWN BROTHERS. I HAD MORE FUN WITH MY FATHER, BUT I LOVED THEM."

LOOK, I AM GOING TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH...

...I HAVE NO MEMORY OF MY BEGINNINGS. NO MEMORY OF THE STORY THAT I SLAYED TIAMAT THE GREAT DRAGON, MAKING THE WORLD FROM HER BELLY AND THE SKY FROM THE REST OF HER.

THAT DOES NOT MEAN IT DIDN'T HAPPEN. I WALK MOST OF THE TIME IN A FOG.

IT IS A DREARY PLACE WHERE I LIVE. I SEE THE SPIRITS OF THE GODS AND THE DEAD. I HEAR PRAYERS AND I TRY TO ANSWER THEM. BUT THE MYTHS OF THE BEGINNING, I DON'T REMEMBER, YOU SEE WHAT I'M SAYING?

NOT ENTIRELY. ARE YOU TELLING ME YOU ARE NOT A GOD?

NO, I AM A GOD AND A POWERFUL ONE. BUT GODS DON'T KNOW EVERYTHING. WE CAN DIE.

AZRIEL, I WANT YOU TO STRIP ME OF THIS GOLD. SEE ME PINK AND ALIVE AS YOU ARE. REACH OUT AND TOUCH ME.

WHY ARE YOU SCARED?

BECAUSE YOU WANT TO ESCAPE.

YES, THIS WOULD GIVE ME FREEDOM. WHY SHOULD THAT FRIGHTEN A SON OF YAHWEH? IT WOULD TEACH ME SOMETHING ABOUT WHAT I CAN DO. I CAN MAKE STORMS, HEAL SOMETIMES, MAKE WISHES COME TRUE.

BECAUSE I KNOW THINGS. I KNOW THE DEMONS PEOPLE FEAR ARE JUST THE RESTLESS DEAD.

"I WAS IMPRESSED WITH HIS GENEROSITY, HIS PATIENCE WITH ME. I LOVED HIM WITH A BEATING HEART. I LOVED HIM WITH TEARS. I LOVED HIM WITH LAUGHTER."

"AS I REACHED OUT, AS I TOUCHED HIM, I ASKED THAT ALL THE GOLD BE STRIPPED. CAN YOU GUESS WHAT HAPPENED?"



"HE BECAME VISIBLE, A GREAT NOBLEMAN IN FESTIVAL GARB. HE WAS BEAUTIFUL .

"COME, MY FRIEND. THIS BODY IS LIGHT, BUT I LIKE THE FORM OF IT."

"PEOPLE NOTICED HIM."

"IT DRAWS EYES TO ME, AND POWER. THEY SEE ME! THEY DON'T KNOW WHO I AM, BUT THEY SEE."

"WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF IF YOU DON'T GO BACK TO THE TEMPLE FOR THE MORNING FEAST?"

"IDIOT! YOU KNOW PERFECTLY WELL I SMELL THE FOOD, I DON'T EAT IT. THEY'LL LAY IT DOWN AND TAKE IT AWAY. NOTHING IS GOING TO HAPPEN."

"HE WAS STARING WILDLY AT THINGS AS WE WALKED. NOW, SPIRIT THAT I AM, I KNOW WHAT IT WAS LIKE FOR HIM TO SEE THESE VIVID COLORS. I UNDERSTAND BETTER WHAT HE HAD ENDURED."



"NEAR THE ISHTAR GATE, WE STOPPED. THE GODDESS HERSELF WAS GLOWERING AT US."

"CAN YOU SEE THAT? SHE DOESN'T LIKE IT. WHAT I'M DOING, THAT I ESCAPED."

"HE BECAME GUARDED. MANY SPIRITS WERE NOW AROUND US."

"NABU, SHAMASH, ALL OF THE BABYLONIAN GODS. THEY WERE ANGRY AT US."



"WHY AREN'T YOU AFRAID OF THEM, AZRIEL?"

"SHOULD I BE? I AM WITH YOU AND I AM HEBREW. THEY ARE NOT MY GODS."



"THAT'S A PERFECT HEBREW ANSWER."

"WOULD I OFFEND THEM IF I TRIED NOT TO SEE THEM? WOULD YOU OFFEND THEM IF YOU BANISHED THEM?"

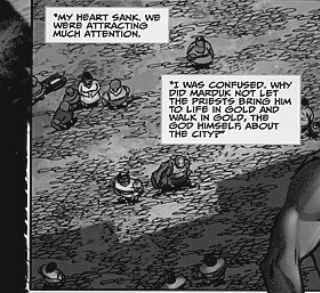
"NO, I AM THE GREAT GOD HERE."



"THE SPIRITS
VANISHED. WHAT
LINGERED WAS THE
RESTLESS DEAD.
EVERYWHERE THE
RESTLESS DEAD."

RETURN TO YOUR SLUMBER,
RETURN TO YOUR REST, RETURN
TO YOUR GRAVES. TO THE SAFETY
OF THE MEMORIES OF YOU IN THE
HEARTS AND MINDS OF YOUR
CHILDREN. RETURN TO
MOTHER EARTH.

"AND THANK GOD,
THEY WENT AWAY."



"MY HEART SANK. WE
WERE ATTRACTING
MUCH ATTENTION."

"I WAS CONFUSED. WHY
DID MARDUK NOT LET
THE PRIESTS BRING HIM
TO LIFE IN GOLD AND
WALK IN GOLD ABOUT
THE CITY?"



AZRIEL, THE PRIESTS ARE
NOT STRONG ENOUGH TO
MAKE ME SOLID, VISIBLE.
THEY DON'T HAVE THE
POWER. THEY DON'T
HAVE YOUR GIFT.



I WOULD ONLY
DO SUCH A THING IF
BABYLON NEEDED IT
OF ME. AND IT DOES
NOT. BUT BABYLON
NEEDS SOMETHING,
AND SOON. AND YOU
KNOW WHY.



"CYRUS THE PERSIAN, HE
DRAWS CLOSER, HE'LL
SACK BABYLON AND..."

"...AND EITHER SLAUGHTER
MY PEOPLE WITH ALL THE
INHABITANTS, OR MAYBE
LET US STAY."

I THINK
WE TOOK
A WRONG
TURN.

WHY? THEY
WOULDN'T NOTICE
ANY MORE
THAN ANYONE
ELSE.

THIS IS WHAT I
MEANT. THEY HAVE
FOUND US. STAY CALM.
SAY NOTHING. GIVE
AWAY NOTHING.

"AT THE HEAD OF THE
CROWD WAS THE PROPHET
ENOCH. I KNEW HE SAW
MARDUK AS HE REALLY WAS.

"MARDUK LOOKED
ENOCH IN THE EYE."

YOU! BRING TO YOURSELF
YOUR LOOT, THE GOLD THAT
YOUR SOLDIERS TOOK
FROM OUR TEMPLE IN
JERUSALEM!

CLOTHE
YOURSELF IN
IT, YOU STUPID,
USELESS IDOL!
YOU WERE MADE
TO BE METAL!

"I COULD HEAR
THE SOUNDS OF
RUNNING FEET. I
COULD FEEL THE
CROWD AROUND
US."



"I WAS ALMOST SICK BY THE TIME WE REACHED THE HOUSE."

"OUTSIDE THE GATE WERE OTHER PROPHETS, AND AN OLD WOMAN EVERYONE FEARED."

COME TO ME, AZRIEL, OR LET ME IN.

COME INSIDE, ARSENATH, COME IN.

"SHE WAS ARSENATH, ONE OF OUR TRIBE. BUT SHE WAS A NECROMANCER. SHE COULD MIX UP POTIONS TO KILL PEOPLE OR MAKE THEM FALL IN LOVE."

"NEXT I REMEMBER LYING IN MY BED, LISTENING TO PEOPLE TALK."

"HOW THE HELL COULD I BELIEVE THIS DEMON, WHY HAD I NOT TOLD THEM I WAS CONVERSING WITH OTHER GODS?"

"FINALLY, MY FATHER SENT FOR ME."

"I DELIBERATELY TRIED TO SEE THE DEAD, TO SEE THEM AS I DID WITH MARDUK, AND I DID, AS WRAITHS. I SHOOK MY HEAD AND SAID 'BE GONE.'"

YOU LEARNED YOUR IMPERIAL WAYS FROM MARDUK, DID YOU NOT?

WON'T YOU OWN UP TO YOUR LOYALTY TO YOUR GOD IN FRONT OF YOUR FATHER? YOU THINK YOU ARE THE FIRST HEBREW TO WORSHIP THE BABYLONIAN GODS?

GET TO THE POINT, WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO SAY TO ME?

NOTHING TO YOU, IT HAS ALL BEEN SAID TO YOUR FATHER.

YOU MAKE YOUR OWN CHOICE, YOU MAKE IT. THE OLD PRIESTS, THEY DON'T KNOW EVERYTHING. WHAT I HOLD HERE, THEY WOULD GIVE ME ANYTHING AND THEY WILL.

HIDE IT HERE. THEY DON'T KNOW HOW TO MIX THE GOLD FOR THE MIRACLE OF THE FESTIVAL WITHOUT ME.

HOW OLD DO YOU THINK THIS TABLET IS?

"IT WAS AT LEAST TWO THOUSAND YEARS OLD. I WANTED TO READ THE OUTSIDE BUT SHE REFUSED."



YOU ARE MOST PRIVILEGED FOR I GIVE YOU ONE CHANCE AT IMMORTALITY. YOU CAN SAVE YOUR PEOPLE, FOR THAT YOU DESERVE SOMETHING. TO BE AN ANGEL OR A GOD.

"SHE LEFT AND I TURNED TO MY FATHER."

WHAT THE HELL IS SHE TALKING ABOUT, FATHER?

SIT DOWN HERE CLOSE TO ME.

WILL YOU LET ME READ THAT DAMNED THING?

MY SON, MY BEAUTIFUL SON. ALL I KNOW IS THAT ALL ISRAEL IS BEGGING FOR YOU TO DO WHAT THE PRIESTS OF MARDUK WANT YOU TO. AS FOR THIS TABLET... I DON'T KNOW.



THEY WANT YOU. TO MAKE THE SERVANT OF THE BONES. THEY KNOW YOU ARE STRONG. AND YOU ARE THE ONLY ONE WHO COULD EVER FORGIVE ME FOR CONDEMNING YOU TO SUCH A FATE.



"THEN REMATH THE PRIEST CAME IN. I REMEMBERED HIM. HE WAS A MALCONTENT. YOUNG AND SMART. RESTLESS."





DID ARSENATH
GIVE IT TO
YOU?

YES. BUT
THAT DOES
NOT MEAN I
WILL GIVE IT
TO YOU.

YOU'D BE
STUPID NOT TO.
YOUR SON GOES
INTO THE GROUND
OTHERWISE.

DON'T CALL
ME NAMES,
HEATHEN. LET'S
GET ON WITH
THIS. LET'S
GO.

"WE WERE TO
BE TAKEN TO
THE PALACE,
EACH ALONE."

MARDUK, ARE
YOU GOING TO
HELP ME?

I DON'T KNOW WHAT
TO TELL YOU, AZRIEL. I
CAN SEE WHAT IS BOUND
TO HAPPEN. I KNOW THIS:
THAT WHEN THIS IS OVER,
I WILL STILL BE HERE.
BUT WHERE WILL
YOU BE?



CAN YOU
GET ME OUT
OF THIS?

I HAVE BEEN
THINKING ABOUT
THAT FOR HOURS. IF I
WERE TO RUN WITH YOU,
WHERE WOULD WE GO?
THEY WOULD KILL
YOUR FATHER, AND
YOU ANYWAY.

TELL THEM NO.
REFUSE THEIR
DESIGNS.

AND DIE,
EITHER
WAY.

THERE IS
A THIRD
WAY.

YOU'RE
SPEAKING OF
ARSENATH AND
THE TABLET.

YES, BUT IT
IS TERRIBLE.

DON'T
LEAVE
ME.

I WON'T.
I AM YOUR
GOD, I'LL BE
WITH YOU.

"WE WERE BROUGHT
TO THE PALACE, TO A
PRIVATE GATE."

"WE WALKED IN SILENCE,
MY FATHER AND I."

"I SAW OUR MISERABLE
REGENT, AND OUR OLD KING."

"AND THEN THERE WAS
CYRUS, THE PERSIAN.
THE CONQUEROR."

"SIT DOWN,
YOUNG MAN, I
WANT YOU AT
YOUR EASE."

"I SHOULD HAVE PROSTRATED
MYSELF, BUT I LOOKED AT
HIM DIRECTLY. WHY NOT? I
WAS GOING TO DIE ANYWAY."

"AZRIEL,
MY BOY, MY
BEAUTIFUL BOY.
I HAVE BEEN IN
BABYLON FOR
DAYS."

"DON'T FEEL
FEAR, FEEL JOY.
YOUR TRIBE WILL BE
RICH AND THEY WILL
LIVE FOREVER, AND
THEY WILL GO
HOME."

"AH, THIS
DEPENDS THEN
ON WHAT I
DO?"

"YOU SPEAK
BOLDLY."

"PUT ANOTHER
CHAIR AT THE
TABLE, WITH YOUR
PERMISSION MY
LORD KING,
CYRUS."

"FOR
WHOM?"

"CYRUS SMILED AND I
MIGHT HAVE LAUGHED
AT HIS RUTHLESSNESS,
HIS DISRESPECT FOR
THE ELDERS. BUT I
WAS PAST LAUGHING."

"FOR
MARDUK."

"I FELT A HAND TOUCH
MINE. IT WAS VAPOROUS.
NO ONE COULD SEE IT,
BUT IT WAS MARDUK."

"MY FATHER SAT
TO MY RIGHT AND
CRIED, HIS HANDS
UP TO HIS FACE."

"ONLY REMATH STARED AT THE EMPTY CHAIR WITH COLD AND CONNIVING EYES."

WELL, MY LORD CYRUS, WHAT DO YOU WANT OF ME? WHY AM I, A HEBREW SCRIBE, SO IMPORTANT SO SUDDENLY?

I WANT BABYLON WITHOUT A SIEGE, WITHOUT DEATH.

I DO NOT WANT TO RAPE YOUR CITY AND LEAVE ASHES AND RUINS. ON THE CONTRARY, I WILL SEND HOME TO JERUSALEM ALL OF YOU, WITH GOLD BEYOND IMAGINING AND PERMISSION TO TAKE BACK ALL THAT YOU POSSESSED.

BUT WHAT HAVE I TO DO WITH IT? YOU HAVE THE STATUE OF MARDUK. RIDE WITH HIM IN THE GREAT WAGON.

HE HOLDS YOUR HAND AND YOU ARE THE KING OF BABYLON. DO YOU THINK I CAN CONTROL THE GOD?

NO, MY SON. THE PROCESSIONS WERE NOT HELD FROM YEAR TO YEAR.

WHAT I NEED NOW IS THE CEREMONY AS IT WAS DONE OF OLD.

YOU WILL BE COVERED IN GOLD. YOU WILL BECOME THE GOD.

"A CHILL PASSED THROUGH ME, AND I HEARD MARDUK: 'I KNOW LITTLE OF WHAT HE SPEAKS, BUT I SEE HORROR FOR YOU.'"

I WILL DO IT, BUT YOU MUST COME, FATHER.

OH, AZRIEL...

THIS IS THE LAST THING I WILL ASK OF YOU. LET ME SEE YOUR UPTURNED FACE AND THE FACE OF MY FAMILY.

I LOVE YOU, MY SON.

I WANT YOU TO KNOW THIS. I DO THIS FOR YOU, FOR OUR PEOPLE. FOR JERUSALEM. I WOULD NOT HAVE ANYONE ELSE SUFFER THIS. I WOULD NOT WISH IT ON ANOTHER.

"SURELY THERE WAS VANITY IN MY WORDS, BUT THE ELDERS ROSE, THEIR PROCLAMATION IN THEIR HANDS. ALL WERE SATISFIED. CYRUS THE PERSIAN WOULD BE THE MESSIAH.

"I COULD SEE NOW THAT THE ROOM WAS THICK WITH SPIRITS. CYRUS ASKED ME KINDLY WHAT I SAW."

ONLY LOST SOULS. I HOPE I DO FIND REST IN THE FIRE OF MY GOD.

"AND REMATH TOLD THEM TO LEAVE US, FOR IT WAS TIME FOR THEM TO DRESS ME AND GROOM ME FOR THE PROCESSIONAL WAY.

"I TOLD MY FATHER THAT I LOVED HIM."



I PROMISE YOU,
ISRAEL WILL LIVE UNDER
ME FOREVER IN PEACE. AS
LONG AS THERE IS CYRUS
THE PERSIAN, YOU HAVE
MY LOVE.

THANK YOU,
MY LORD. BE
GOOD TO MY
PEOPLE.



PARTING
WORDS FOR
ME, MARDUK?

I'LL BE WITH YOU. I SHALL
USE MY POWER TO EASE
YOUR PAIN. I REMEMBER
NOTHING OF ANY SUCH
PROCESSION, OR BIRTH, OR
DEATH. MAYBE WHEN YOUR
FLAME HAS GONE I WILL
BE HERE STILL FOR
BABYLON.



IF YOU LOVE
YOUR PEOPLE,
MAYBE I CAN LOVE
MY PEOPLE A
LITTLE MORE.

REMEMBER
YOUR PROMISE TO
ME, ARSENATH.

YOU HAD
BETTER WRITE
DOWN EVERYTHING
I TELL YOU. IT'S A
WONDER ANY OF YOU
CAN EVEN READ
THE PRAYERS!



YOU CAN'T
DO THIS WITHOUT
ME. YOU'RE A LAUGH.
ALL OF YOU, YOU
PIOUS PRIESTS
OF MARDUK.

HIS FATHER HAS
THE OTHER TABLET
HIDDEN. WHEN THIS IS
CONCLUDED, I WILL
SEE YOU HAVE IT.



OH, YOU
NEEDN'T
DOUBT HIM.
HE'S A FINE
DEMON.





WHAT IS
THIS OTHER
TABLET YOU
SPEAK OF?

A PRAYER
FOR YOUR
SOUL. THAT
YOU MAY SEE
GOD.

BUT OF
COURSE, YOU
KNOW I'M LYING
TO YOU.

IT'S AN OLD
CHARM. YOU CAN
CHOOSE THEN, YOU'LL
BE DYING. THE REST
WE DO HERE IS
MEDICINE, NOT
MAGIC.



"I COULD HEAR
THE OLD WOMAN
RECITING WORDS
IN SUMERIAN.

"A FORMULA, A
MIXTURE OF GOLD
AND LEAD AND
OTHER HERBS. I
KNEW IT WOULD
KILL ANYBODY.

"IT HAD IN IT THE SEEDS THAT
PEOPLE CHEW TO SEE VISIONS.
WHO KNOWS, MAYBE I WOULD
MISS MY OWN DEATH.

"REMATH CAME
TO ME TO TELL
ME THEY WERE
READY IN THE
OTHER CHAMBER.



"HE TOLD ME THE
GOLD WOULD COOL.
I NEEDN'T FEAR IT.
BUT I FEARED THAT
BOILING GOLD.

"THEY ASKED WHAT
THEY COULD BRING ME.

"I WANTED TO SLEEP.
THEY COVERED ME WITH
THE SOFTEST BLANKET.
THAT WAS SWEET."



"I SLEPT FROM SHEER EXHAUSTION. I REMEMBER BEING PUZZLED I DIDN'T WANT TO SEE MARDUK."

"A VISION CAME TO ME, I THINK IT WAS FROM EZEKIEL."



"I THOUGHT; 'FOR THAT VALLEY, I DO THIS, FOR THAT VALLEY, FOR ALL OF US WHO ARE MERELY HUMAN.'"



"WAS I TOO
PROUD? I
DON'T KNOW.
I WAS YOUNG.

"I WANTED
NOTHING.

"THEY APPLIED THE
GOLD, BEGINNING
AT MY FEET.

"IT WAS WARM,
BUT DIDN'T HURT.

"I STOOD
BEFORE A
MIRROR, I
SAW MYSELF.

"I SAW THE GOD."

TO BE CONTINUED...

ANNE RICE'S
SERVANT OF THE BONES
NEXT MONTH!



IDW PUBLISHING IN SEPTEMBER: COUNTING DOWN

Musings & Hot Mustard from IDW's Director of Retail Marketing, Dirk Wood

BACK TO SCHOOL!

Hey everybody, it's back to school time! The dog days of summer are behind us. Time to put on your short pants, comb your hair, grab an apple to bring your teacher, and head for the bus stop! Professor Wood is in the house, and it's time to take some notes!

Let's see, when college starts, you need to make a list. Pencils? Check. New folder with the *Van Halen* logo scratched into it? Check. New shoes that won't get you beat up? Check. Now, what am I forgetting? Um... Oh yeah! Books! How can you start a school year without books? Well, here are a few suggestions for books that fit perfectly with your class schedule!

CHEMISTRY: If you're looking for chemistry between two creators, then check out *The Monstrous Collection* of Steve Niles and Bernie Wrightson! This book collects their already classic collaborations, *Dead She Said*, *The Ghouls and Doe Macabre*, only oversized and in black and white, just the way Bernie's art needs to be seen!



ART HISTORY: Looking for some classic, mind-blowing art? Look no further than *The Definitive Flash Gordon & Jungle Jim!* Eisner Award-winner Dean Mullaney collects Alex Raymond's classic strips in absolutely beautiful remastered, oversized classic. If you can fit it in your book bag, it's a must! If you can't, buy a new book bag!

ANATOMY 101: Do I need to explain why you need the trade paperback collection of the recent smash hit *Suicide Girls* series for this class? Didn't think so.



Study hard everybody! In fact, you may have to stay up all night cramming with these classics, if you're going to get the kind of grades you need to get ahead in life.

Get moving! The first bell is about to ring.

-Dirk
Dirk Wood
Director, Retail Marketing

IDW



SEPTEMBER RELEASES FROM IDW PUBLISHING

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Anne Rice's *Servant of the Bones* #2
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Duke Nukem: Glorious Bastard #3
Dungeons & Dragons #11
Dungeons & Dragons:
Forgotten Realms: Drizzt #2
Ghostbusters #1
G.I. Joe: A Real American Hero #170
G.I. Joe Civil War 100-Page Spectacular
G.I. Joe #5
Godzilla: Gangsters & Goliaths #4
Godzilla: Kingdom of Monsters #7
Infection: Outbreak #4
Jurassic Park: Dangerous Games #1
Locke & Key: The Guide to Known Keys
Snake Eyes #5
Star Trek #1
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles #2
Transformers #25
Transformers #26
True Blood: The French Quarter #2



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The Definitive Flash Gordon and
Jungle Jim, Vol. 1 HC
Doctor Who Classics, Vol. 7 TPB
Done to Death TPB
Dungeons & Dragons:
Forgotten Realms Classics, Vol. 2 TPB
The Ghost of D'Ain Adventure HC
G.I. Joe: Disavowed, Vol. 4 TPB
G.I. Joe: Origins, Vol. 5 TPB
Godzilla: Kingdom of Monsters, Vol. 1 TPB
Grimm's Fairytales Vol. 2 HC
The Keep HC
Locke & Key:
Welcome to Lovecraft Special Edition HC
Love and Capes, Vol. 3:
Wake Up Where You Are TPB
The Monstrous Collection of
Steve Niles and Bernie Wrightson HC
The Pound TPB
Star Trek Movie Universe
Box Set TPB/Slipcase
Suicide Girls TPB
Transformers, Vol. 4: Heart of Darkness TPB
True Blood, Vol. 2: Tainted Love HC
Zenithus Vol. 2 TPB



ANNE RICE'S SERVANT OF THE BONES



Babylon. The city of gods and kings. Before he became a spirit of vengeance, Azriel was a young Hebrew who could talk to Babylon's deity, Marduk. And it's that unearthly connection that leads to his dark destiny, when the city priests and witch Arsenath prepare him to become a "living god."

Cover by Renae DeLiz

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